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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7472  
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 1740  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 0095  
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1554  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 2344  
RUEHMT/AMCONSUL MONTREAL 0243  
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC 0977  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000055

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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)  
SUBJECT: PROVISIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL FEELING ITS WAY

REF: 07 PORT AU PRINCE 1959

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(U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

Summary

1. (SBU) In an introductory call on the newly-appointed Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) January 9, Ambassador found the councilors tentatively defining their role, eager to partner with the U.S. and the international community, and anxious to receive U.S. and international assistance for Haiti's upcoming Senate elections. The CEP plans to have a draft electoral law ready within a week, but to submit it to discussion with the President and with political parties before submitting it to Parliament. The Ambassador emphasized the need for quick action on the electoral law and on establishing an election calendar, while assuring the CEP councilors of solid and continuing U.S. political and financial support for Haiti's electoral process. End Summary.

Mission of the CEP

2. (SBU) Ambassador on January 9 called on the new Provisional Electoral Council that took office December 12 (reftel). All nine councilors were present. Ambassador underscored the importance of the CEP's electoral mission to the consolidation of Haiti's democracy. In the preparations for the upcoming elections for one-third of the Senate, the U.S. would continue its intensive engagement in and support of Haiti's electoral process. CEP President Frantz-Gerard Verret underscored the CEP's desire to work with international partners such as the U.S. Regular elections were essential to give Haiti's democracy firm roots. He conceded that the task before them would be long and arduous. Verret recapped the CEP's three-tiered mandate as covering the upcoming election to renew one-third of the Senate, all interim by-elections, and finally the indirect elections (reftel). He stated that the CEP was defining its tasks, but

that its first priorities were finalizing the draft electoral law, setting an electoral calendar, and clarifying the CEP budget. CEP Secretary General Leonel Raphael noted that the CEP was drawing up an "inventory" of their responsibilities and assigning individual councilors specific tasks. Raphael noted that the CEP viewed the U.S. and then MINUSTAH as its primary international partners.

#### Election Law/Election Calendar

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¶3. (SBU) Raphael assured Ambassador that the draft electoral law would be ready by the end of the week of January 7, but would be vetted with the Executive Branch and discussed with certain political "sectors" such as political parties before being sent to Parliament. He argued that these consultations were needed to give broad segments of society "ownership" of the election process. Raphael expressed doubt about the possibility and utility of setting down a precise election calendar at the start, since it probably could not hold up under the pressure of events. Councilor Jasmin interjected that President Preval would have to approve this calendar. He also doubted it could be adhered to -- except the date of the election itself. The Ambassador emphasized that quick action was needed on the electoral law, and that a defined election calendar was needed that all election actors respected. We were impressed by the avid interest of Haitians in elections and the election process. The U.S. and the international community firmly wanted to see movement in the election process. President Verret said the U.S. "would not be disappointed" in that regard. Secretary General Raphael also underscored that the CEP would "manage its internal differences." The Ambassador urged them to speak publicly with one voice, and to establish a good working relationship with CEP Director General Jacques Bernard, a person with long experience administering

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elections.

#### Election Assistance

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¶4. (SBU) Several councilors inquired about the level and nature of USG assistance for the elections, as well as about international community coordination of election assistance. The Ambassador replied that the breakdown between technical and other assistance had yet to be decided and would have to be discussed -- while assuring them that the approximately USD 4 million was available. The past practice of USG and other donors coordinating election assistance with MINUSTAH would continue. CEP President Verret suggested that some of the assistance should go to increase salaries of CEP councilors and employees, which he deemed inadequate to the need for a professional electoral institution. Secretary General Raphael recalled that a primary task of this Provisional CEP was to reinforce itself institutionally, including through the hiring and training of skilled staff, to lay the basis for a strong Permanent CEP that would succeed it.

#### Comment: Anticipated Problems Ahead

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¶5. (SBU) The new Provisional Electoral Council, none of whose members has significant electoral management experience, is still feeling its way on its tasks and roles. However, from the beginning they are taking steps to protect their authority and limit that of the Director General. DG Jacques Bernard told the Ambassador January 9 that the CEP had asked President Preval to revamp the CEP's by-laws to give the CEP rather than the Director General ultimate control over running elections, by mandating CEP approval of all major management and personnel decisions by the DG. Such an arrangement would slow election preparations at every turn. Post also fears that submitting the draft electoral

law to broad public discussion will further delay the election process. This also shows the nominally independent CEP already leaning heavily on President Preval.

SANDERSON